

Albert Gallatin Jenkins

Son of Marshall One of Most Exceptional Men of Virginia

NOTE: This is the first in a series of articles on the life of lawyer-journalist Albert Gallatin Jenkins. Readers are invited to supply additional material for enrichment in a biographical volume on Jenkins.

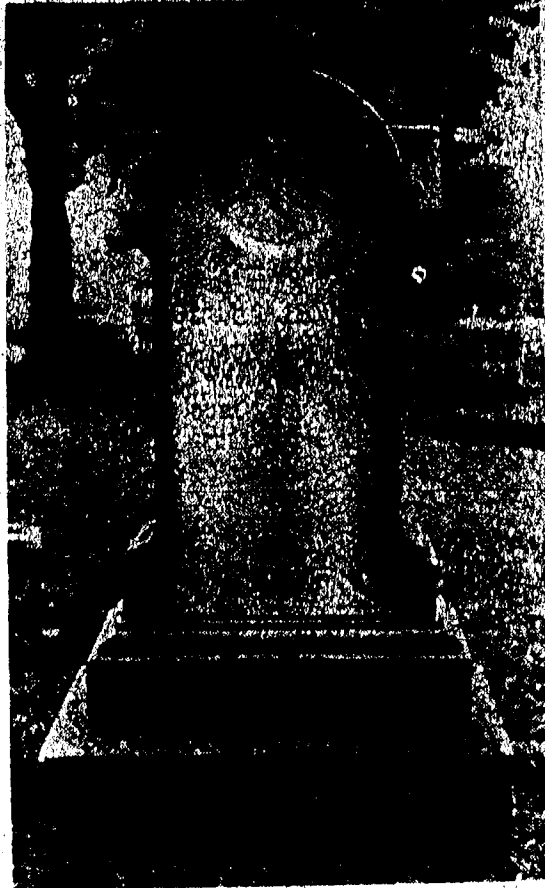
By Congressman Ken Hechler

Easter Sunday in Huntington was a crisp, sparkling day without a cloud in the sky. Just as the sun was blazing a fiery good-bye in the west, I was driving along Norway Avenue, and something impelled me to turn in the entrance to Springhill Cemetery. A little over a hundred feet from the entrance are a group of graves of Confederate veterans, above which rises the large headstone commemorating "General A. G. Jenkins."

On that April morning in 1961, I wondered to myself: "What manner of man was this whose mortal remains rest here? A century ago, on the eve of the firing on Fort Sumter, this man served in the Congress of the United States, representing Cabell County and the Ohio Valley. What manner of Congressman was he?" These and other questions I pondered as I left Springhill Cemetery in the dusk.

The search took me to many sources — to the old Jenkins home in Greenbottom, 18 miles northeast of Huntington on the road to Point Pleasant; to the ancestral homes of his forebears in eastern Virginia; to that warm and friendly historian, Dr. Roy Bird Cook in Charleston; to New York to trace the career of Jenkins' brilliant daughter whose stage name was Albert Gallatin; to J. Pembroke Woods of Huntington, grandson of Jenkins' older sister; and to many libraries to delve into the fascinating facets of his career.

I soon became convinced that this son of Marshall, who attended the University when it was known as "Marshall Acad-



GEN. JENKINS' MARKER IN SPRINGHILL CEMETERY

emy," was one of the most exceptional men that western Virginia ever produced, a man who made a brilliant career as an attorney, as a statesman, and on the battlefield. Usually remembered alone for his dashing exploits as a cavalry general, Albert Gallatin Jenkins was essentially a man of peace whose constructive statecraft has been drowned out by the drums of war.

Come with me back into his-

torials. In the center, Queen Elizabeth, under whom the college was founded; Dr. Price, the first principal; and Leoline Jenkins, beneath whose portrait is the Jenkins motto: "Vigilante et Virtute."

Leoline Jenkins flourished in Wales about the time the Mayflower touched down at Plymouth Rock. Not until the 1700's were the members of the Jenkins family heard from in the New World. The life of Albert Gallatin Jenkins' father, William Jenkins, coincided with the early life of the new nation. Born the year after the Declaration of Independence, he developed in early manhood into an individual of great force, ability and enterprise. Along the James River in Virginia, William Jenkins gradually built up a fleet of small boats. These soon grew into one of the principal means of communication and commerce between the up country and the Lynchburg and Richmond tobacco, grain and stock markets.

William Jenkins prospered mightily in the fields of trade and commerce. He looked around for new worlds to conquer. His prosperous business career was interrupted by the War of 1812, in which he served with honor. It is not entirely clear whether his rank of "Captain" was a wartime rank; probably it was accorded to him as a captain of his fleet of ships. Soon the enterprising captain had launched sailing vessels down the coast to the Caribbean for trading purposes, and then to the coast of South America. From Norfolk, Va., Captain William Jenkins exported wheat to seaports on the coast of Brazil, bringing back cargoes of coffee.

In Rockbridge County, in south central Virginia, William

Jenkins owned a valuable farm called "Buffalo Forge." The driving energy of the man allowed him no time for family pursuits. He remained stubbornly single, despite the fact his wealth and attractive personality made him one of the prize "catches" in all of Virginia. Not until he was 47 years of age did Captain Jenkins really fall in love, and then he fell hard for a 30-year-old beauty named Janetta Grigsby McNutt. Janetta was one of 13 children of Rachel and Alexander McNutt, who traced their ancestry back to the Highland Scotch family of McNaught. One of Janetta's brothers was Governor Alexander McNutt of Mississippi, and there is probably also a relationship with the silver-haired Governor Paul V. McNutt of Indiana.

On October 5, 1824, Captain Jenkins married Janetta Grigsby McNutt. They were overjoyed when their first-born arrived. It was a girl, and she was named Eustasia, after the Captain's sister, Eustasia Jenkins Lacy. Little Eustasia first saw the light of day on September 3, 1825.

This restless, enterprising man looked again for new worlds to conquer. When little Eustasia was barely three weeks old, Captain Jenkins piled his sister, Mrs. Lacy, his bride and his first-born into wagons. The wagons rumbled over the everlasting hills, across the Allegheny Mountains. The farm at Buffalo Forge was sold to William Weaver. The search for a new land began.

"Where are we going?" asked the bride of less than a year.

"To Cabell County on the Ohio River," answered Captain Jenkins as the wagons set forth into the quiet September haze.